

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 0124

FOR VICE PRESIDENT'S PARTY

EUR FOR HUGHES
EUR/NE FOR DONCHI

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (MONDALE, WALTER F.)
SUBJECT: VISIT TO ICELAND OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE: BIO
INFORMATION ON ICELANDIC PARTICIPANTS IN TALKS

REF: (A) REYKJAVIK 0114 (B) STATE 012408

1. FOLLOWING IS BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON ICELANDIC PARTICIPANTS IN TALKS WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE IN AIRPORT MEETING AT KEFLAVIK (REF A). PROPOSED SCENARIO BEING FORWARDED SEPTEL.

2. GEIR HALLGRIMSSON (GARE HOTL' GREEM-SON), PRIME MINISTER OF ICELAND, ADDRESSED AS MR. PRIME MINISTER. 51 YEARS OLD, PRIME MINISTER SINCE AUGUST 1974. FOLLOWED CLASSIC INDEPENDENCE PARTY PATH TO NATIONAL LEADERSHIP: MEMBER AND PRESIDENT OF PARTY YOUTH WING, REYKJAVIK CITY COUNCIL, MAYOR OF REYKJAVIK (1960), MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT (1970), PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN (1971), AND CHAIRMAN (1973). LAWYER BY PROFESSION, HALLGRIMSSON HAS LONG BEEN
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ACTIVE IN FAMILY'S LARGE AND PROSPEROUS IMPORT-EXPORT BUSINESS AND STILL HAS INTERESTS IN FIRM. DID GRADUATE STUDY AT HARVARD IN 1948-49. HALLGRIMSSON IS MARRIED AND HAS FOUR CHILDREN. HE SPEAKS ENGLISH WELL.

3. HALLGRIMSSON IS STAUNCHLY PRO-US AND PRO-NATO

AND ONE OF ICELAND'S MOST OUTSPOKEN ADVOCATES OF NEED FOR US-MANNED DEFENSE FORCE HERE. THOUGH KNOWN AS A SKILLED POLITICIAN AND ADMINISTRATOR AND RESPECTED FOR HIS COURAGE AND INTEGRITY, HE IS NOT A STRONG NATIONAL LEADER AND IS OFTEN COMPARED UNFAVORABLY WITH DYNAMIC IP LEADERS OF THE PAST. AS PRIME MINISTER, HE HAS HEADED A GOVERNMENT THAT CLAIMS THE MILESTONE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF WINNING RECOGNITION OF A 200-MILE FISHERIES JURISDICTION AND THEREBY GUARANTEEING ICELANDIC CONTROL OVER RESOURCES VITAL TO THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE. GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO MADE SOME PROGRESS IN CORRECTING SEVERE ECONOMIC ILLS THAT FACED IT IN 1974. ECONOMY, HOWEVER, IS FAR FROM HEALTHY AND STANDS TO DOMINATE GOVERNMENT'S ATTENTION THROUGH REMAINDER OF TERM IN OFFICE.

4. HENRIK BJORNSSON (BYARN' - SON), PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY OF FOREIGN MINISTRY. ADDRESSED AS MR. AMBASSADOR. 62 YEARS OLD, HAS HELD CURRENT POST AS RANKING CAREER OFFICIAL IN FOREIGN MINISTRY SINCE EARLY 1976. (HE ALSO HELD THE SAME POSITION BETWEEN 1956 AND 1961). A CAREER DIPLOMAT SINCE 1939; SERVED IN WASHINGTON 1942-44; AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED KINGDOM 1961-65; AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE 1965-76. SON OF ICELAND'S FIRST PRESIDENT. MARRIED AND HAS THREE CHILDREN. SPEAKS ENGLISH WELL.

5. BJORN BJARNASON (BYURT BJART'-NA-SON), DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL IN OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER. CONFIDENTIAL

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ADDRESSED AS MR. BJARNASON. 32 YEARS OLD, HAS BEEN IN CURRENT POSITION, WHICH CARRIES SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SINCE 1974. EX-JOURNALIST, LONG ACTIVE IN INDEPENDENCE PARTY POLITICS; ONE OF RELATIVELY FEW ICELANDERS REGARDED AS FOREIGN/SECURITY AFFAIRS SPECIALIST. SON OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER THE LATE BJARNI BENEDIKTSSON. MARRIED TO ONE OF COUNTRY'S LEADING CONCERT VIOLINISTS, ONE CHILD. SPEAKS ENGLISH WELL, IF SOMEWHAT HESITATINGLY. BLAKE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED VICE PRESIDENT'S PARTY.

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